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"OVER THE TOP"

BY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT ☆ ☆

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Fired by the news of the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine, Arthur Guy Empey, an American, leaves his office in Jersey City and goes to England where he enlists in the British army.

CHAPTER II—After a period of training, Empey volunteers for immediate service and soon finds himself in rest billets "somewhere in France," where he first makes the acquaintance of the ever-present "cootles."

CHAPTER III—Empey attends his first church services at the front while a German Fokker circles over the congregation.

CHAPTER IV—Empey's command goes into the front-line trenches and is under fire for the first time.

CHAPTER V—Empey learns to adopt the motto of the British Tommy, "If you are going to get it, you'll get it, so never worry."

CHAPTER VI—Back in rest billets, Empey gets his first experience as a mess orderly.

CHAPTER VII—Empey learns how the British soldiers are fed.

CHAPTER VIII—Back in the front-line trench, Empey sees his first friend of the trenches "go West."

CHAPTER IX—Empey makes his first visit to a dugout in "Suicide Ditch."

CHAPTER X—Empey learns what constitutes a "day's work" in the front-line trench.

CHAPTER XI—Empey goes "over the top" for the first time in a charge on the German trenches and is wounded by a bayonet thrust.

CHAPTER XII—Empey joins the "suicide club" as the bombing squad is called.

CHAPTER XIII—Each Tommy gets an official bath.

CHAPTER XIV—Empey helps dig an advanced trench under German fire.

CHAPTER XV—On "listening post" in No Man's Land.

CHAPTER XVI—Two artillerymen "put one over" on Old Pepper, their regimental commander.

CHAPTER XVII—Empey has narrow escape while on patrol duty in No Man's Land.

CHAPTER XVIII—Back in rest billets Empey writes and stages a farce comedy.

CHAPTER XIX—Soldiers have many ways to amuse themselves while "on their own."

CHAPTER XX—Empey volunteers for machine gun service and goes back into the front-line trenches.

CHAPTER XXI—Empey again goes "over the top" in a charge which cost his company 17 killed and 31 wounded.

CHAPTER XXII—Trick with a machine gun silences one bothersome Fritz.

CHAPTER XXIII—German attack, preceded by gas wave, is repulsed.

CHAPTER XXIV—Empey is forced to take part in an execution as a member of the firing squad.

CHAPTER XXV—British prepare for the Big Push—the battle of the Somme.

CHAPTER XXVI—In a trench raid, preceding the Big Push, Empey is desperately wounded and lies unconscious in No Man's Land for 36 hours.

CHAPTER XXVII—After four months in a British hospital, Empey is discharged as "physically unfit for further war service."

CHAPTER I.

From Mufti to Khaki.

It was in an office in Jersey City. I was sitting at my desk talking to a lieutenant of the Jersey National Guard. On the wall was a big war map decorated with variously colored little flags showing the position of the opposing armies on the western front in France. In front of me on the desk lay a New York paper with big flaring headlines:

LUSITANIA SUNK! AMERICAN LIVES LOST!

The windows were open and a feeling of spring pervaded the air. Through the open windows came the strains of a hurdy-gurdy playing in the street—"I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier."

"Lusitania Sunk! American Lives Lost!"—"I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier." To us these did not seem to jibe.

The lieutenant in silence opened one of the lower drawers of his desk and took from it an American flag which he solemnly draped over the war map on the wall. Then, turning to me with a grim face, said:

"How about it, sergeant? You had better get out the muster roll of the Mounted Scouts, as I think they will be needed in the course of a few days."

We busied ourselves till late in the evening writing out emergency telegrams for the men to report when the call should come from Washington. Then we went home.

I crossed over to New York, and as I went up Fulton street to take the subway to Brooklyn, the lights in the tall buildings of New York seemed to be burning brighter than usual, as if they, too, had read "Lusitania Sunk! American Lives Lost!" They seemed to be glowing with anger and righteous indignation, and their rays wigwagged the message, "Repay!"

Months passed, the telegrams lying handy, but covered with dust. Then, one momentous morning the lieutenant with a sigh of disgust removed the flag from the war map and returned

Guy Empey.

to his desk. I immediately followed this action by throwing the telegrams into the wastebasket. Then we looked at each other in silence. He was squirming in his chair and I felt depressed and uneasy.

The telephone rang and I answered it. It was a business call for me, requesting my services for an out-of-town assignment. Business was not very good, so this was very welcome. After listening to the proposition I seemed to be swayed by a peculiarly strong force within me, and answered, "I am sorry that I cannot accept your offer, but I am leaving for England next week," and hung up the receiver. The lieutenant swung around in his chair, and stared at me in blank astonishment. A sinking sensation came over me, but I defiantly answered his look with, "Well, it's so. I'm going." And I went.

The trip across was uneventful. I landed at Tilbury, England, then got into a string of matchbox cars and proceeded to London, arriving there about 10 p. m. I took a room in a hotel near St. Pancras station for "five and six—fire extra." The room was minus the fire, but the "extra" seemed to keep me warm. That night there was a Zeppelin raid, but I didn't see much of it, because the slit in the curtains was too small and I had no desire to make it larger. Next morning the telephone bell rang, and someone asked, "Are you there?" I was, hardly. Anyway, I learned that the Zeps had returned to their fatherland, so I went out into the street expecting to see scenes of awful devastation and a cowering populace, but everything was normal. People were calmly proceeding to their work. Crossing the street, I accosted a Bobbie with:

"Can you direct me to the place of damage?"

He asked me, "What damage?"

In surprise, I answered, "Why, the damage caused by the Zeps."

With a wink he replied:

"There was no damage; we missed them again."

After several fruitless inquiries of the passersby, I decided to go on my own in search of ruined buildings and scenes of destruction. I boarded a bus which carried me through Tottenham Court road. Recruiting posters were everywhere. The one that impressed me most was a life-size picture of Lord Kitchener with his finger pointing directly at me, under the caption of "Your King and Country Need You." No matter which way I turned, the accusing finger followed me. I was an American, in mufti, and had a little American flag in the lapel of my coat. I had no king, and my country had seen fit not to need me, but still that pointing finger made me feel small and ill at ease. I got off the bus to try to dissipate this feeling by mixing with the throng of the sidewalks.

Presently I came to a recruiting office. Inside, sitting at a desk was a lonely Tommy Atkins. I decided to interview him in regard to joining the British army. I opened the door. He looked up and greeted me with "I s'y, myte, want to tyke on?"

I looked at him and answered, "Well, whatever that is, I'll take a chance at it."

Without the aid of an interpreter, I found out that Tommy wanted to know if I cared to join the British army. He asked me: "Did you ever hear of the Royal Fusiliers?" Well, in London, you know, Yanks are supposed to know everything, so I was not going to appear ignorant and answered, "Sure."

After listening for one half-hour to Tommy's tale of their exploits on the firing line, I decided to join. Tommy took me to the recruiting headquarters, where I met a typical English captain. He asked my nationality. I immediately pulled out my American passport and showed it to him. It was signed by Lansing. After looking at the passport, he informed me that he was sorry but could not enlist me, as it would be a breach of neutrality. I insisted that I was not neutral, because to me it seemed that a real American could not be neutral when big things were in progress, but the captain would not enlist me.

With disgust in my heart I went out in the street. I had gone about a block when a recruiting sergeant who had followed me out of the office tapped me on the shoulder with his swagger stick and said: "S'y, I can get you in the army. We have a 'lef-tenant' down at the other office who can do anything. He has just come out of the O. T. C. (Officers' Training corps) and does not know what neutrality is." I decided to take a chance, and accepted his invitation for an introduction to the lieutenant. I entered the office and went up to him, opened up my passport and said:

"Before going further I wish to state that I am an American, not too proud to fight, and want to join your army."

He looked at me in a nonchalant manner, and answered, "That's all right; we take anything over here."

I looked at him kind of hard and replied, "So I notice," but it went over his head.

He got out an enlistment blank, and placing his finger on a blank line said, "Sign here."

I answered, "Not on your tintype."

"I beg your pardon?"

Then I explained to him that I would not sign it without first reading it. I read it over and signed for duration of war. Some of the recruits were lucky. They signed for seven years only!

Then he asked me my birthplace. I answered, "Ogden, Utah."

He said, "Oh, yes, just outside of New York?"

With a smile, I replied, "Well, it's up the state a little."

Then I was taken before the doctor and passed as physically fit, and was issued a uniform. When I reported back to the lieutenant, he suggested that, being an American, I go on recruiting service and try to shame some of the slackers into joining the army.

"All you have to do," he said, "is to go out on the street, and when you see a young fellow in mufti who looks physically fit, just stop him and give him this kind of a talk: 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself, a Britisher, physically fit, and in mufti when your king and country need you? Don't you know that your country is at war and that the place for every young Briton is on the firing line? Here I am, an American, in khaki, who came four thousand miles to fight for your king and country, and you, as yet, have not

Swearing in a Recruit.

enlisted. Why don't you join? Now is the time.'

"This argument ought to get many recruits, Empey, so go out and see what you can do."

He then gave me a small rosette of red, white and blue ribbon, with three little streamers hanging down. This was the recruiting insignia and was to be worn on the left side of the cap.

Armed with a swagger stick and my patriotic rosette, I went out into Tottenham Court road in quest of cannon fodder.

Two or three poorly dressed civilians passed me, and although they appeared physically fit, I said to myself, "They don't want to join the army; perhaps they have someone dependent on them for support," so I did not accost them.

Coming down the street I saw a young dandy, top hat and all, with a fashionably dressed girl walking beside him. I muttered, "You are my meat," and when he came abreast of me I stepped directly in his path and stopped him with my swagger stick, saying:

"You would look fine in khaki; why not change that top hat for a steel helmet? Aren't you ashamed of yourself, a husky young chap like you in mufti when men are needed in the trenches? Here I am, an American, come four thousand miles from Ogden, Utah, just outside of New York, to fight for your king and country. Don't be a slacker, buck up and get into uniform; come over to the recruiting office and I'll have you enlisted."

He yawned and answered, "I don't care if you came forty thousand miles, no one asked you to," and he walked on. The girl gave me a sneering look; I was speechless.

I recruited for three weeks and nearly got one recruit.

This perhaps was not the greatest stunt in the world, but it got back at the officer who had told me, "Yes, we take anything over here." I had been spending a good lot of my recruiting time in the saloon bar of the Wheat Sheaf pub (there was a very attractive blonde barmaid, who helped kill time—I was not as serious in those days as I was a little later when I reached the front)—well, it was the sixth day and my recruiting report was blank. I was getting low in the pocket—barmaids haven't much use for anyone who cannot buy drinks—so I looked around for recruiting material. You know a man on recruiting service gets a "bob" or shilling for every recruit he entices into joining the army, the recruit is supposed to get this, but he would not be a recruit if he were wise to this fact, would he?

Down at the end of the bar was a young fellow in mufti who was very patriotic—he had about four "Old Six" ales aboard. He asked me if he could join, showed me his left hand, two fingers were missing, but I said that did not matter as "we take anything over here." The left hand is the rifle hand as the piece is carried at the slope on the left shoulder. Nearly everything in England is "by the left," even general traffic keeps to the port side.

I took the applicant over to headquarters, where he was hurriedly examined. Recruiting surgeons were busy in those days and did not have much time for thorough physical examinations. My recruit was passed as "fit" by the doctor and turned over to a corporal to make note of his scars. I was mystified. Suddenly the corporal burst out with, "Blime me, two of his fingers are gone." Turning to me he said, "You certainly have your nerve with you, not 'alf you ain't, to bring this beggar in."

The doctor came over and exploded, "What do you mean by bringing in a man in this condition?"

Looking out of the corner of my eye I noticed that the officer who had recruited me had joined the group, and I could not help answering, "Well, sir, I was told that you took anything over here."

I think they called it "Yankee impudence," anyhow it ended my recruiting.

CHAPTER II.

Blighty to Rest Billets.

The next morning the captain sent for me and informed me: "Empey, as a recruiting sergeant you are a washout," and sent me to a training depot.

After arriving at this place, I was hustled to the quartermaster stores and received an awful shock. The quartermaster sergeant spread a waterproof sheet on the ground and commenced throwing a miscellaneous assortment of straps, buckles and other paraphernalia into it. I thought he would never stop, but when the pile reached to my knees he paused long enough to say, "Next, No. 5217, 'Arris, B company." I gazed in bewilderment at the pile of junk in front of me, and then my eyes wandered around looking for the wagon which was to carry it to barracks. I was rudely brought to earth by the "quarter" exclaiming, "'Ere, you, 'op it; tyke it aw'y; blind my eyes, 'e's looking for 'is batman to 'elp 'im carry it."

Struggling under the load, with frequent pauses for rest, I reached our barracks (large car barns), and my platoon leader came to the rescue. It was a marvel to me how quickly he assembled the equipment. After he had completed the task, he showed me how to adjust it on my person. Pretty soon I stood before him a proper Tommy Atkins in heavy marching order, feeling like an overloaded camel.

On my feet were heavy-soled boots, studded with hobnails, the toes and heels of which were re-enforced by steel half-moons. My legs were incased in woolen puttees, olive drab in color, with my trousers overlapping them at the top. Then a woolen khaki tunic, under which was a bluish gray woolen shirt, minus a collar; beneath this shirt a woolen belly band about six inches wide, held in place by tie strings of white tape. On my head was a heavy woolen trench cap, with huge earlaps buttoned over the top. Then the equipment: A canvas belt, with ammunition pockets, and two wide canvas straps like suspenders, called "D" straps, fastened to the belt in front, passing over each shoulder, crossing in the middle of my back, and attached by buckles to the rear of the belt. On the right side of the belt hung a water bottle, covered with felt; on the left side was my bayonet and scabbard, and intrenching tool handle, this handle strapped to the bayonet scabbard. In the rear was my intrenching tool, carried in a canvas case. This tool was a combination pick and spade. A canvas haversack was strapped to the left side of the belt, while on my back was the pack, also of canvas, held in place by two canvas straps over the shoulders; suspended on the bottom of the pack was my mess tin or canteen in a neat little canvas case. My waterproof sheet, looking like a jelly roll, was strapped on top of the pack, with a wooden stick for cleaning the breech of the rifle projecting from each end. On a lanyard around my waist hung a huge jackknife with a can-opener attachment. The pack contained my overcoat, an extra pair of socks, change of underwear, hold all (containing knife, fork, spoon, comb, toothbrush, lather brush, shaving soap, and a razor made of tin, with "Made in England" stamped on the blade; when trying to shave with this it made you wish that you were at war with Patagonia, so that you could have a "hollow ground" stamped "Made in Germany"); then your housewife, button-cleaning outfit, consisting of a brass button stick, two stiff brushes, and a box of "Soldiers' Friend" paste; then a shoe brush and a box of dubbin, a writing pad, indelible pencil, envelopes, and pay book, and personal belongings, such as a small mirror, a decent razor and a sheaf of unanswered letters, and fags. In your haversack you carry your iron rations, meaning a tin of bully beef, four biscuits and a can containing tea, sugar and Oxo cubes; a couple of pipes and a pack of shag, a tin of rifle oil, and a pull-through. Tommy generally carries the oil with his rations; it gives the cheese a sort of sardine taste.

Add to this a first-aid pouch and a long, ungainly rifle patterned after the Daniel Boone period, and you have an idea of a British soldier in Blighty.

Before leaving for France, this rifle is taken from him and he is issued with a Lee-Enfield short trench rifle and a ration bag.

In France he receives two gas helmets, a sheepskin coat, rubber mackintosh, steel helmet, two blankets, tortoise-shell goggles, a balaclava helmet, gloves and a tin of antifrostbite grease which is excellent for greasing the boots. Add to this the weight of his rations, and can you blame Tommy for growling at a twenty-kilo route march?

Having served as sergeant major in the United States cavalry, I tried to tell the English drill sergeants their business, but it did not work. They immediately put me as batman in their mess. Many a greasy dish of stew was accidentally spilled over them.

I would sooner fight than be a waiter, so when the order came through from headquarters calling for a draft of 250 re-enforcements for France, I volunteered.

(To Be Continued)

MR. SIMPKINS PAYS HIS INCOME TAX

By ROBERT McBLAIR.

Mr. Simpkins gazed at the portrait on the wall till his eyes filled with tears. It was a portrait of his father, Colonel Simpkins, who had four times been promoted for valor during the Civil War and had died bravely on the field of action. Mr. Simpkins' throat ached now for two reasons: First, he reverenced and adored the memory of his father; secondly, his age and his eyes and his game leg wouldn't let him go to war himself. And as he observed the martial bearing and uncompromising gaze of Colonel Simpkins he saw, in imagination, the khaki-clad lads of the new generation marching forth and crossing three thousand miles of sea to fight, maybe die, for liberty.

Mr. Simpkins peered around to make sure that neither Bess nor John (who were at the teasing ages of sixteen and seventeen) were where they could see him, then he straightened and threw his right arm up for a salute. But his gouty shoulder twinged, and he groaned. He couldn't even salute.

"Damn!" said Mr. Simpkins, and with his other hand fiercely twirled his white mustachios.

He turned and limped into the library and sat down creakily before the mahogany desk on which were lying the blanks for his income tax statement, blanks which he had rather grumpily got from the Internal Revenue officer only that day after luncheon on his way home from the club.

Mr. Simpkins' income for 1917 had amounted to just about $15,000, and he had been rather snappy on the subject of taxes ever since he had discovered that the more income a man has the greater the percentage of it he pays in taxes. He could think of several men who, like himself, were married and had two children, and yet, although their incomes were nearly half of his, they would pay only a small fraction of the amount he paid. He gloomily drew the blank nearer and began filling in the information that it asked for.

As Mr. Simpkins' income was $15,000 he had to figure out the amounts payable on each of the successive smaller classes of incomes in order to arrive at the total due from himself. He passed over the first class who must pay taxes, that is, single men making over 1,000. His calculation for married men then showed up as follows:

First, they pay 2 per cent. (under the 1916 law) on all income over $4,000, deducting $200 for each of their children under eighteen years. In Mr. Simpkins' case this was $212, which he put down in the "payable" column.

He saw next that, under the 1917 law, married men pay an additional 2 per cent. on all over $2,000—with the same allowance for children. This added $252 to his "payable" column.

He then observed that for every $2,500 jump in his income over $5,000 he had to pay a Surtax, the percentage growing larger with each jump. This was $250 more added to his burden. And on top of all this came an "Excess Profits" tax of 8 per cent. on all "occupation" income over $6,000, making $720 more.

The total, then, he must pay was fourteen hundred and thirty-four dollars.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mr. Simpkins angrily. "There's young Henry Wilkins, who married Jake Johnson's girl, he makes $2,000 and he doesn't pay a cent of taxes. I guess this is his war as well as mine!"

Thinking of young Henry Wilkins, he remembered that Mrs. Wilkins went every afternoon to make bandages for the Red Cross and that Henry, who was a lawyer, was aiding the Local Draft Board with its questionnaires.

"Well," he admitted to himself, "that makes a difference."

He thought next of Judge Willoughby, whose income was about $3,000.

"He only pays $20," commented Mr. Simpkins, not quite so angrily this time; and then a thought struck him and he sat up rigidly in his chair.

Judge Willoughby's son had been drowned on the Tuscania when it was submarined with the loss of two hundred soldiers.

"Judge Willoughby gave his son to America," muttered Mr. Simpkins.

He leaned forward suddenly and put his face in his hands.

For a long time Mr. Simpkins sat very still in that position. There was no sound in the library except the ticking of the tall clock and an occasional trill of laughter from the children skylarking upstairs. The square of light on the carpet gradually withdrew itself through the window, and first twilight and then darkness settled in about the quiet, white haired, sometimes irascible old man.

Mr. Simpkins was thinking things which he would never afterward speak of, he was thinking things that were too sacred ever to be put into words. But some inkling of his thoughts may be found in his rejoinder to Mrs. Simpkins when that placid lady came in and turned on the lights, and asked him whether he was ready for dinner.

"Judge Willoughby's only son was worth as much as fourteen hundred and thirty-four dollars, wasn't he?" Mr. Simpkins demanded of her.

As his wife, who was not unused to his superficial irritations, watched him in mild astonishment, Mr. Simpkins limped out to the hall and took his old felt hat and silver-headed cane from the hat rack. Letting himself out into the foggy evening, he tapped his way down to the corner, and mailed his income tax statement and check with his own hands.

"Now, God be thanked," said Mr. Simpkins as the lid clanked shut over his missive, "I can do this much for my country, anyhow."

Favor Minimum Price

Complaints from various sources have reached the meat division of the United States Food Administration to the effect that producers felt the minimum price on hogs of $15.50 per hundred weight on the basis of packers' droves at the Chicago market which the Food Administration had established at the request of growers for the purpose of stabilizing the market in the general policy of increasing production was detrimental to their interests. Joseph P. Cotton, head of the meat division, recently authorized the following statement:

"In my judgment that minimum has been a sustaining element in prices of hogs. But in order to find out whether my judgment was well grounded, I decided upon a referendum. I therefore sought the advice of one hundred leading hog producers, editors of farm journals and presidents of live stock exchanges in the principal hog producing states.

"Answers to my requests have been overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining the minimum, only three answers expressing dissatisfaction with the plan have been received. The minimum will continue in force."